

## CHAPTER 5 TEAM NUTRITION

It takes more than school foodservice providing healthy food choices in the cafeteria to change students' poor eating behaviors. Children's behaviors are influenced by food and beverage messages within their total environment—including the school cafeteria, the classroom, the entire school campus, at home, the community, and through the media. It takes a team approach to create a healthy nutrition environment for children—what USDA refers to as “Team Nutrition.”

### About Team Nutrition

As discussed in the earlier chapters, in the earlier chapters, in 1995, the *School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children* regulations updated nutrition standards to ensure that school meals were consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. USDA recognized that schools needed help to put the rules into actions. School foodservice professionals requested technical assistance to help school create healthy appealing meals and nutrition education to motivate students to select and consume the healthier meals.

So, Team Nutrition was born an integrated, behavior-based, comprehensive plan for promoting the nutritional health of the Nation's children.

### How Does Team Nutrition Work?

#### Team Nutrition Uses Three Behavior-Oriented Strategies

1. Provide training and technical assistance to help foodservice staff working with child nutrition programs:
  - Plan and prepare healthy meals that look good, meet nutrition standards, and appeal to taste and cultural preferences.
  - Link child nutrition programs with other nutrition and health-related school programs and activities, and use the school cafeteria as a learning center
  - Practice sound financial accountability in child nutrition programs operation
2. Provide multifaceted, integrated nutrition education for children, their parents, and other adults who influence children's behavior:
  - Deliver consistent nutrition messages:
    - o Eat a variety of foods,
    - o Eat more fruits and vegetables, and grains, and

- o Eat lower fat foods more often and be physically active
- Reinforce the messages through the school, classroom, cafeteria, home, community and media

### 3. Build school and community support:

- Encourage schools to adopt policies that promote healthy eating and physical activity,
- Provide educational materials to help schools achieve success, and
- Promote a school and community environment that supports healthy eating and physical activity.

## **Communication Channels**

Nutrition education messages are delivered through Team Nutrition's six reinforcing communication channels to reach children where they live, and play, as well as the adults who care for them and can influence their behavior. These channels are:

### **Food Service Initiatives**

The cafeteria offers a positive atmosphere that reinforces nutrition education messages and provides opportunities for students to practice skills learned in the classroom.

### **Classroom Activities**

Interactive classroom activities that incorporate nutrition education messages and provide opportunities for students to practice skills learned in the classroom.

### **School-wide Events**

Nutrition education activities that all students, school personnel, parents, and the community can enjoy (a school garden project, nutrition fair, or school play) are fun learning opportunities for everyone and reinforce the value of healthy eating and physical activity.

### **Home Activities**

Home activities for children and their parents reinforce messages that children learn at school and in the community. Through their positive example, parents help children learn to make good choices for healthy eating and physical activity. Home activities also provide opportunities for students to influence parental shopping and food preparation decisions.

### **Media Events and Coverage**

Media coverage of school and community events helps ensure that Team Nutrition messages are repeated and are received by wide audiences. Press releases, public service announcements, and features are appropriate tools for disseminating nutrition messages and enhancing community support for Team Nutrition goals.

## What Resources Does Team Nutrition Provide?

Since 1995, Team Nutrition has been working to develop an array of resources, such as newsletters, publications, videos, CD's, websites – to support each of the three-implementation strategies. These include:

- A variety of training and technical assistance materials for child nutrition programs' foodservice personnel, such as *Fruit and Vegetable Galore*, *Food Buying Guide and Menu Planner for a Healthy School Meals*, etc.
- Nutrition curricula for elementary and middle schools, such as *Food and Me*, *Food Times*, *Food Works* and *yourSELF*.
- A colorful, lively, and informative assortment of nutrition education materials to reach children and their caregivers, such as *Food, Family and Fun*; *Team Up At Home*; and *Ten Steps for Parents*.
- Support materials for schools and communities to help them foster children's healthy eating and activity, such as *Changing the Scene*, and *Making It Happen!*
- *MyPyramid for Kids* educational material brings the messages of *MyPyramid* to elementary school children. Teachers can easily teach *MyPyramid for Kids* by using the classroom materials, including lesson plans, an interactive game, and a *MyPyramid for Kids* Poster.

## Join the Team!

All schools participating in the child nutrition programs are invited to enroll as Team Nutrition School, making a commitment to take the lead in encouraging positive eating and physical activity behavior changes. Currently, over 31, 000 schools are enrolled as Team Nutrition Schools.

If your school is not a Team Nutrition School, enroll today. You can download a copy of the Team Nutrition Enrollment form at: [teamnutrition.usda.gov/Join/enrollmentform.pdf](http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Join/enrollmentform.pdf). Or refer to Appendix T for a Team Nutrition School enrollment form. You may mail or fax this form directly to Team Nutrition.

Mail to:

Team Nutrition  
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 632  
Alexandria, VA 22302

Or fax to:

Team Nutrition  
(703) 305-2549

As a newly signed-on Team Nutrition School, you will receive a free Resource Kit from USDA to help you plan and carry out activities for students, parents, and teachers. Team Nutrition Schools will also receive new Team Nutrition materials as they are developed.

**Key:** Schools should notify USDA if the TN leader in your school(s) changes so that TN contact information can be updated. You can e-mail TN directly at the website listed below.

Bookmark and visit USDA's Team Nutrition Website often at [teamnutrition.usda.gov](http://teamnutrition.usda.gov) to obtain materials and learn about what other Team Nutrition Schools are doing.

You can make a big difference – in children's energy and readiness to learn today. Healthy children become healthy, productive adults and increase their success and wellbeing throughout their lives.